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ANCIENT CHURCH MUSIC.

From the "Manchester Examiner and Times."

At the present day, we have rarely an opportunity of hearing properly sung—sung as it used to be, between two and three centuries ago, in this country, sometimes by thousands of voices simultaneously—the genuine old psalm tunes. That the smooth but manly, simple but stately, and ever beautiful chorales of the early Anglican church, should have been almost entirely superseded by the light and effeminate compositions now, unhappily, so prevalent in our churches and chapels, however unaccountable, is notoriously true. Even those few of the former which have nominally remained in use, such as the Old Hundredth Psalm, have been so altered in their rhythm and their harmonies, and are generally sung in so drawing and slovenly a manner, as to render them very dissimilar from the older compositions bearing the same name. We are glad, however, to have noticed for some time passed unmistakable indications of a gradual return to the cultivation of the psalm tune as it was heard in its palmy days. Musicians of learning and correct taste have brought out of the obscurity in which they had so long lain, these religious songs of our ancestors. Their unrivalled beauty, and admirable suitableness for the purposes of devotional singing, were at once apparent; and their introduction into places of worship has followed as a necessary consequence. We have been led into these remarks from having had an opportunity of hearing some beautiful specimens of this class of music at the Great George Street Chapel, Salford. The committee having some hundred copies of the tunes (all from Ravenscroft's *Whole Book of Psalms*)* intended to be sung on the occasion of a sermon on behalf of the Sunday school, we were led, from one of these falling under our notice, to attend. The singers (all amateurs) numbered about sixty. Upwards of twenty-five sung the air, or plain-song, about twelve the bass, twelve the treble, and about nine the alto. With scarcely an exception, we believe, every individual in the choirs could read music. This is as it ought to be. The first tune sung was an excellent arrangement of the Old 137th, by Ravenscroft, a double common metre tune of great beauty. After prayer, the well-known hymn of Dr. Watts, beginning "Come, sound his praise abroad," was sung to the fine old minor "Southwell," as arranged by Mr. Pierson. It might, at first, by some, seem unsuitable to the words; but as sung to the hymn, as a whole, it was afterwards felt by all to be most appropriate. The leader led it off with spirit; and it was sung with great precision and energy, the audience being evidently affected. What a pity minors should be so generally excluded from the songs of the sanctuary! After an excellent sermon by Rev. W. F. Burchell, of Rochdale, that most beautiful tune, "Audi, Israel," was sung. It is sometimes called the "Ten Commandments' tune." The arrangement was by Allison, written for Este's work, and copied thence into Ravenscroft's publication. It is somewhat ornate; and the harmonies, especially in the last line, unusually rich. It was very well sung, by the trebles especially. While the collection was being made, the well-known hymn, "Come, let us join our cheerful songs," &c., was sung

to the Old 81st, the choir remaining seated. This fine old chorale, supposed by some to have been composed by Martin Luther, was sweetly sung. The last given was Milton's fine arrangement of "York" tune, at one period the most popular in England. We need scarcely add, that the congregation (quite as numerous as the place would hold) seemed much delighted with what they had heard; and we shall be glad of future opportunities of hearing other specimens of this class of ancient church song.

Review of New Music.

Sabilla Novello's Vocal School. Second Edition.

We are not surprised that this work should already have reached a second edition. The young lady's position in the musical world, both as a concert singer and as a professor of singing, is one to inspire confidence in any method coming from her pen; and she has given ample proof in this treatise, that she is well able to expound the principles by which she has attained the rank she now holds in her profession. The exercises have a simple and easy accompaniment, that any pupil can play for herself—a great improvement, be it observed, on the figured basses in the works of the elder masters of solfeggio, which only threw a needless difficulty in the student's way. In many instances the same accompaniment serves for a variety of exercises, thereby greatly simplifying the pupil's labour. For superficial students, such as amateur young ladies, who take alarm at a book of solfeggio, separate numbers of the work have been printed off, amongst which they can choose whatever *pleases* them most. But when we inform them that the whole *Vocal School* only numbers four-and-twenty pages, twelve of which are filled by miscellaneous and even amusing matter, we should esteem their love of music lukewarm indeed, if they hesitated going through the whole course of instruction set down for their use; especially as we can assure them, that whosoever shall have completely mastered the first twelve pages, will be able to sing anything and everything.—*Court Journal.*

Sequel to Sabilla Novello's Vocal School, containing a Selection from Sabbatini's Vocal Exercises.

These exercises are in the attractive form of canons and rounds for two soprano voices. Some of them are very pretty, and all are useful, containing, as they profess to do, "nearly every combination of intervals and time." They are excellent practice for preparing the pupil to sing duets; while those who are even proficient will derive considerable benefit from studying them, merely to keep up the flexibility of their voices. Like the above, this work may be purchased either as a whole or in separate numbers, at one shilling each.—*Court Journal.*

Elementary Vocal Exercises, selected chiefly from "Winter." By J. DOBSON COLLETT.

This short work is, as the title informs us, quite elementary. Instead of the syllable A, the author uses for vocalization the words *seconda maggior, seconda minor, terza maggior, terza minor*, and so forth—a plan which may prove useful to those who study the rudiments of music and singing simultaneously; and to such, no doubt, the work is chiefly addressed. It may, therefore, be looked upon as a good prelude to Miss Novello's complete *Vocal School*.—*Court Journal.*

* A Reprint of all the Tunes in Ravenscroft's Book of Psalms, 1621, with Introductory Remarks by the Rev. W. H. Havergal, M.A. [Noveho, London.]